

Summerslam Count-Up – 2002: The Performance Of A Lifetime

Summerslam 2002

Date: August 25, 2002

Location: Nassau Veterans Memorial, Uniondale, New York

Attendance: 14,797

Commentators: Michael Cole, Jerry Lawler, Tazz, Jim Ross

The main story coming into this show would be the Brand Split but that's not really an issue here as the main four PPVs weren't brand exclusive. As for the show itself it's another double main event with Rock defending his WWE (yeah E) Title against a beast named Brock Lesnar and the returning Shawn Michaels fighting his best friend HHH in a street fight. This is considered one of the best shows of all time so hopefully it holds up. Let's get to it.

There's no opening video this year for some reason.

Kurt Angle vs. Rey Mysterio

Rey beat Angle in a tag match and has been an annoyance for him lately. This is right after Mysterio debuted as part of probably the best year for new talent in company history. In 2002 WWE got Mysterio, Brock Lesnar, Batista, Randy Orton and a guy named Cena. This is when Rey's knees weren't held together by glue so it should be awesome. Rey comes in from behind and takes Angle down with a quick springboard dropkick but he has to go to the ropes to escape the ankle lock. An early 619 attempt misses and Angle pulls him to the floor. Very fast start.

Angle kicks at the leg as they come back in. An uppercut staggers Rey and a wheelbarrow suplex puts him down. Rey grabs the rope to avoid a German and gets a quick two off a rollup. Kurt gets two off a backbreaker and bends Rey's back around the ropes. The fans are all over Angle but he shrugs off some forearms and catches a headscissors into a side slam for two.

Off to a wicked half crab on Rey but he somehow sneaks out and gets two off a rollup. Kurt takes his head off with a clothesline, only to get caught in a jawbreaker. Rey tries to speed things up but walks into the overhead belly to belly. There go the straps but Rey armdrags out of the Angle Slam and sends Angle to the floor. Rey loads up a dive but the referee stops him, drawing the most heat of the night. Mysterio will have none of that and dives OVER THE REFEREE to take Angle out.

Back in and a springboard legdrop gets two as the crowd is on fire. Rey tries a victory roll but gets caught in the ankle lock. Mysterio rolls out and send Angle to the ropes for the 619. The West Coast Pop gets a VERY close two and a spinwheel kick puts Angle down again. Mysterio goes up top but Angle runs the ropes for the suplex, only to have Rey flip over him but he tweaks the ankle on the landing. He's fine enough to pop back up and dropkick Angle on the corner though and he loads up a hurricanrana. Angle falls forward on it though and the ankle lock is good for the submission.

Rating: A-. EXCELLENT opener here with Mysterio showing he could hang with anyone in the company. He really was amazing to watch when he wasn't banged up and bloated like he is today and this might be his best match ever. This was a great choice for an opener and both guys looked amazing.

Eric Bischoff (Raw) and Stephanie McMahon (Smackdown) agree to share the GM's office tonight.

Chris Jericho vs. Ric Flair

Flair is a legend, Jericho is a young punk. This led to Jericho running down Flair over and over again so Flair destroyed a bunch of Jericho's band Fozzy's equipment as they were performing on Raw. Jericho takes him into the corner so Flair slaps him in the face. Feeling out process to start as Flair looks to be in a dancing mood tonight. A backdrop puts Flair down and a belly to back suplex does the same.

Back up and Flair hits some LOUD chops to take over. They head to the corner and it's Jericho firing off some chops of his own to set up a Flair Flip in the corner. A clothesline puts Flair on the floor and Jericho hits an elbow off the top to crush him against the barricade.

Back in and Jericho fires off punches before doing a little dance. The Canadian gets two off a middle rope missile dropkick and chokes Flair with some tape. Flair fires off some chops but gets dropped by a single right hand.

Jericho goes up top but Flair pulls a page out of every opponent he's ever had to slam him down. Chris misses a charge into the corner and Flair backdrops him down. NOW we go to school but Jericho escapes a suplex and tries the Walls. Flair rolls out but Jericho hits an enziguri to put Naitch down again.

The Lionsault misses and Flair goes back to the chops to take over. Flair tries a half crab but Jericho escapes and puts Flair in the Figure Four. Ric makes the rope but taps out anyway, which isn't a submission apparently. There's a rule clarification if you ever need one. The referee goes to tell the timekeeper that the match is still going, allowing Flair to hit a low blow and put on the Figure Four for the submission. Don't bother setting up the move or anything Ric.

Rating: C. I'm sorry for not having much of note to say but it's almost impossible to add stuff to good matches. Nice match here as Flair gets to be the dirtiest player in the game again but it wasn't anything spectacular. Jericho was still awesome as a heel and it felt good to see Flair make a comeback and beat him in the middle of the ring. This was at a point when Flair could still look decent in a pair of trunks so it wasn't an embarrassment at all.

Heyman gives Brock a pep talk for the main event tonight. Brock is in Rock's head and the next big thing arrives tonight. This is when Brock was the unstoppable monster instead of being HHH cannon fodder for a year. I still can't get over that it lasted that long.

Eddie Guerrero vs. Edge

Edge is still finding his footing as a singles guy and the potential is through the roof, so the solution is the same as it was with DDP back in 97: put him with really talented people who can make him look awesome. This resulted in Edge vs. Regal, Angle and Guerrero for about six months, making everyone love Edge like few thought possible. Apparently Eddie is

jealous of Edge's popularity and his status as a sex symbol. Cole's words, not mine.

Technical stuff to start until Edge suplexes Eddie to the apron but gets his neck snapped across the top rope. Edge comes back with a hot shot and a standing powerslam for two before tying Eddie up in the ropes. There's the spear to Eddie's ribs but Eddie avoids the second attempt to send the Canadian to the floor. Edge is holding his shoulder (the spear arm) and Eddie has something to focus on. The bad shoulder goes into the steps and Edge is in trouble.

Back in and Eddie DDTs the arm before driving some elbows into the shoulder. A jumping DDT to the arm off the top gets two and it's off to a keylock. Edge finally gets to a rope so Eddie stomps even harder on the shoulder. Now it's a cross face chickenwing of all moves shifted into a Fujiwara Armbar. Back up and Eddie belly to back suplexes him down but stays on the arm with a top wristlock. Edge finally slams him down to get a breather and fires off some clotheslines.

The half nelson faceplant gets two and Edge suplexes Eddie to the floor. A cross body off the top to the floor puts Guerrero down but Edge injures the shoulder again. Back in and Edge goes up but has to counter a superplex into a front superplex for two on Eddie. Edge loads up the spear but Eddie dropkicks him in the shoulder to put him down.

The frog splash hits knees and there's the Edgecution for two. Another Edgecution is countered into a northern lights and Eddie hits the frog splash onto the bad shoulder for two. Some IDIOTS are chanting boring at this. Eddie goes up again but gets slammed down allowing Edge to hit the spear (with the bad shoulder with no problem) for the pin.

Rating: B-. This was chugging right along until the STUPID ending. You cannot have Eddie working over on the arm for ten minutes and then hit the finisher like it's nothing. What's the point in even working on the arm if that's how you end the match? It was going fine until that point but the ending just stopped it cold, much like the spear should have done for Edge.

The Un-Americans are ready to beat Booker T and Goldust to prove that

America sucks. The only bad part though is they have to do it here in Long Island. This is a classic gimmick and would work at almost any point in history.

Raw Tag Titles: Goldust/Booker T vs. Un-Americans

The Un-Americans are Lance Storm and Christian (with Test) and they have the gold coming in. Goldust and Christian start with the Canadian being run over and uppercutted down for two. Off to Storm who gets caught in an atomic drop and it's Booker T in to fire off right hands. Booker drops a big knee for two and brings in Goldust, only to have Storm poke him in the eye to take over.

The fans chant USA like the true xenophobes they are. We get some classic heel cheating as the Canadians double team until Christian gets two off a backbreaker. Back to Storm who walks into a kind of Boss Man Slam but Christian distracts the referee so the hot tag doesn't count. The beating continues but Goldust catapults Christian into Storm to buy himself some time.

Goldust slaps the mat to try to fire up the crowd but Storm takes out Booker again so there's no one for Goldie to tag. The champions miss a Conchairto and NOW the hot tag goes through. Booker cleans house and lays in the chops to Christian. A missile dropkick gets two but Booker accidentally superkicks the referee. Booker hits a double ax kick to take out both champions and there's the Spinarooni. Christian is kicked down but here's Test with a big boot to lay out Booker, giving Christian the pin.

Rating: D+. This was a BIG step down from what we've had so far tonight. The match was just dull and nothing we haven't seen done better a hundred times. Booker and Goldust had chemistry and fan support so we had to wait four months for them to get the titles. The Un-Americans were a find midcard heel act but the titles should have changed here.

Nidia is at The World (WWF New York) and makes out with a fan for some reason.

Bischoff and Stephanie continue their stupid back and forth.

Intercontinental Title: Rob Van Dam vs. Chris Benoit

Benoit is defending and a Smackdown guy in this brand vs. brand match. Van Dam hits some quick kicks to send Benoit to the outside but Benoit takes him down back inside. Van Dam spins away from a kick in the corner and hits a spinning cross body out of the corner for two. Benoit ducks another kick and hits a great release German suplex to take over. An elbow to the face gets two more for Benoit and it's time to work on the back.

Benoit gets another near fall off a backbreaker and a snap suplex gets the same. Off to an armbar as Benoit wants the shoulder now. Rob gets some quick twos off rollups but Benoit runs him over with another elbow to the face. Benoit runs into a boot in the corner but the split legged moonsault hits knees. The Swan Dive misses but Benoit rolls away from the Five Star as well.

Now the Crossface goes on for a good while but Van Dam makes the ropes. The challenger goes up but Benoit shoves him off the top and shoulder first into the barricade. Back in and Benoit hits a shoulder breaker (see that people? It's called psychology. LEARN IT!) for two as the fans are distracted by something. Benoit wisely puts on a rest hold until their attention is back again.

They trade cross arm chokes with Benoit taking over again. Van Dam kicks his leg out but misses Rolling Thunder, allowing Benoit to put on the Crossface again. Rob elbows out but gets rolled up for two. Benoit goes back to the arm and sends him shoulder first into the post. A northern lights suplex onto the arm has Van Dam...looking confused and two more don't really change that.

Back to the Crossface and Van Dam looks more annoyed than anything else. Rob (with his hair down for maybe the only time I ever remember) makes the rope and puts a Crossface on Benoit for a few seconds. A jumping kick to the face puts Benoit down for two and now Rolling Thunder connects.

Van Dam hits a shoulder to the ribs but injures the shoulder again (thanks for selling Rob). Not that it matters though as he kicks Benoit in the face for two. Rob gets crotched on the top but counters a belly to

back superplex into a cross body to put both guys down. Van Dam pops up and hits the Five Star for the pin and the title. Extra points for Rob doing the finger point from the mat when he's announced as the new champion.

Rating: B. This bad shoulder selling is getting on my nerves. Benoit had RVD in one of the best submissions ever three different times and Van Dam looked like he had a five year old child on his leg. The rest of the match however was very solid with Rob hanging in there with Benoit who was his usual awesome self.

Stephanie, having just lost the IC Title to Raw (giving them all the belts I believe) laughs. This story continued to not make sense until they just gave up.

Video on the Un-Americans who hate American. Undertaker wasn't going to stand for this and turned face to deal with them. Well among other reasons but this was his first major feud as a face.

Undertaker vs. Test

Feeling out process to start with Taker sending Test into the corner and cranking on the arm. A big clothesline takes Test down for two but he shoves the referee into the ropes to break up Old School. Test sends him into the steps and into the turnbuckle to keep Taker in trouble. A running clothesline in the corner staggers Taker and it's off to an armbar. Taker suplexes out but misses an elbow drop as this continues to drag.

Test misses an elbow as well and now Old School connects. Snake Eyes connects but Test ducks the big boot. Taker shoves him off and hits the chokeslam for two. Christian and Storm come in as a distraction but take a chokeslam each, allowing Test to hit his big boot for two. Test tries a chair shot but hits the ropes, sending it back into his own face. The Tombstone finishes this.

Rating: D. This wasn't horrible but come on. It's Undertaker vs. Test at the second biggest show of the year with Test being as an Un-American. Did you really expect ANY other result here? The match was passable

enough but it's definitely the lame match on the show. To be fair though it's not even nine minutes long and it's not a disaster.

Now let's get to the real reason this show rocks.

We recap Shawn Michaels vs. HHH. They were best friends back in the late 90s but Shawn broke his back and had to retire. Over the next four years, HHH rose to the top of the company and a higher level than Shawn ever achieved. Shawn came back to Raw and offered to reform DX, but HHH laid him out, saying they were never friends and he just used Shawn.

Then someone rammed Shawn through a windshield and HHH vowed to find out who it was. Shawn found security video revealing it was HHH, who said he did it to prove Shawn is vulnerable. Shawn's doctors said he'd make a full recovery. Say by, Summerslam? The match isn't sanctioned and is a street fight because it couldn't be anything else. This is a great example of a feud based on hatred instead of some convoluted idea and it made the match much better.

Shawn Michaels vs. HHH

Shawn is in jeans tonight to hide the knee braces. Michaels comes out with right hands but HHH sends him to the outside. Not that it matters as Shawn is right back inside with more right hands. HHH is tossed to the floor and Shawn hits a nice dive to take him out. Remember that this is Shawn's first match since March of 1998, or four and a half years ago.

A clothesline puts HHH down again and it's garbage can time. HHH gets in a shot to the ribs and drops Shawn face first onto the barricade to get a breather. Shawn comes back in and is tossed over the top again but he skins the cat to a big pop. A trashcan shot caves in HHH's head and a top rope fist to the head puts him down again. Shawn tunes up the band but HHH counters into a backbreaker to get to the meat of the match.

Another backbreaker has Shawn in agony and flopping like a fish as only he can. HHH gives a crotch chop and kicks Shawn down with ease. It's chair time but a shot to the back only gets two. Shawn escapes a suplex into an O'Connor Roll for two but walks into a facebuster. A DDT onto the chair is only good for two but Shawn is busted open. HHH takes off

Shawn's belt and whips him in the back as the screaming continues.

And now it's sledgehammer time. Shawn gets in some shots to the ribs to escape and HHH drops the hammer. The fans are behind HBK but he gets whipped into the corner and it's off to the abdominal stretch. HHH gets caught holding the ropes and Hebner physically breaks the hold before yelling HHH into the corner. They slug it out again and HHH loads up a superplex but Shawn shoves him off, only to get crotched. HHH blasts Shawn's wide open back with the chair and the crowd is somber.

A backbreaker onto the chair has Shawn lying motionless but HHH only gets two. He covers a few more times and HHH is very frustrated. A side slam onto the chair gets another two as JR screams for a fast count. Shawn counters a Pedigree onto the chair with a low blow and both guys are down. The HBK chant starts up again and HHH has the chair superkicked into his face. Now HHH is busted open too and Shawn slugs away before hitting the forearm and the nippup to blow the roof off the place.

Shawn backdrops him down and cracks HHH in the head with the chair. HHH is whipped over the corner and out to the floor where Shawn gets to beat on him with the belt. Shawn knocks him onto the announce table and hits him in the head with Hugo Savinovich's shoe (Lawler: "A heel for a heel!"). HHH is sent into the steps and here's a ladder being slammed into HHH's face.

Some shots to the ribs have HHH screaming and the ladder is placed against the post with HHH being catapulted face first into the steel. That's only good for two so Shawn heads outside again to get the ladder. HHH baseball slides the ladder into Michaels and pounds away at the cut head. For some reason HHH tries to come in off the top and gets caught in a superplex for two.

The crowd is losing their minds off these kickouts. A sunset flip gets two for Shawn but he gets caught by the knee to the face for two. HHH brings in the steps but Shawn drop toeholds him face first into the steel. A clothesline puts HHH on the floor and Shawn pulls out a table. Well why not since we've used everything else.

Shawn puts him on the table and splashes him from the top rope in the big

spot of the match. Both guys are DONE and the fans are in awe. Shawn sends the ladder back inside, says he loves us all, and drops the elbow from the top. Michaels has that look in his eye and tunes up the band but HHH catches the kick coming in. He loads up the Pedigree but Shawn sweeps the legs and rolls HHH up for the pin to blow the roof off the place again.

Rating: A+. Anyone who has read my stuff over the years knows I do not like a lot of things about HHH. For tonight, forget all that because this is one of the best matches of all time. I've seen this match several times and it still had me smiling to see Shawn make comeback after comeback and give HHH every single thing he deserved. It goes to show how great Shawn is as he came in after being gone nearly FIVE YEARS and does this. That's remarkable when you think about it and is one of the greatest performances of all time.

Let's talk about the match a little bit. It's an excellent example of how to book a comeback, which is probably Shawn's greatest strength. Shawn had the people believing that he was DEAD but he kept hanging in there time after time and made the huge comeback just like the crowd wanted. The other thing that works so well is the ending which a lot of people overlook.

The crux of this match was the destruction of both guys and seeing how far they could take it. At the end though, Shawn uses a basic wrestling counter and a cradle to win, totally shifting gears and beating HHH, the Cerebral Assassin, by thinking. That's INCREDIBLE psychology and the perfect way to end this match. All in all, it's a masterpiece and arguably the best performance of all time, all things considered.

Post match HHH becomes the universal evil by hitting Shawn square in the back with the sledgehammer and leaving him laying. Shawn is taken out on a stretcher.

Now that we've had that amazing match, it's time for something completely stupid. Howard Finkel of all people has something to say. He's been here forever and while Major League Baseball may be going on strike, he'll be here forever. This brings out Trish Stratus who slapped him in the face

recently. Howard insults Long Island women and Trish says he has a sexy voice. He makes unfunny references and they hug but it's a ruse to have Lillian Garcia come in and kick Howard low.

We recap Rock vs. Lesnar. Brock is the new monster and Rock is the warrior champion and there isn't much more to it than that. The videos of Rocky going through special training (actually for The Rundown) were pretty awesome.

WWF World Title: The Rock vs. Brock Lesnar

Lesnar has his agent Paul Heyman with him. Rock charges into the ring and walks into a belly to belly suplex for two. Lesnar hits a pair of backbreakers for two and we head to the floor with Brock clotheslining him into the crowd. Apparently Rock has bad ribs coming into this match. Back in and Brock hits another overhead belly to belly suplex for two before dropping some elbows. A powerslam puts Rock down for two as this is one sided so far. Brock fires off some shoulder in the corner but misses a charge and hits the post.

Rock hits a belly to back suplex of his own and both guys are down. Both guys nip up at the same time and Rock isn't sure what to think. Rock hits some clotheslines but it takes three of them to finally drop Brock. The champion hooks a Sharpshooter and Brock is in trouble. Heyman throws in a chair which distracts Rocky, allowing Lesnar to get out and blast Rock in the ribs with the chair. Off to the bearhug which ended Hogan and takes Rock down to the mat here.

The fans are entirely behind Lesnar here which is very strange to hear. Rock doesn't let his arm drop a third time and now we get a Rocky chant. The champion finally escapes the hold but gets a hard shoulder into the ribs to slow him down again. Rock comes out of the corner with a running clothesline and the crowd reaction is mixed at best. A series of right hands knocks Lesnar out to the floor and Rock loads up the announce table. After scaring Heyman to death, Rock launches Lesnar face first into the post.

There's a Rock Bottom through the table for Heyman and the announcers couldn't be happier. Back in and the Rock Bottom hits Lesnar for a VERY

close two. The fans shift affiliation again, now cheering for Brock. Their current hero hits a Rock Bottom of his own for two and both guys stagger to their feet. Rock hits the spinebuster but as he loads up the Elbow, Brock pops up and hits a HUGE clothesline. Here comes the F5 but Rock escapes and tries the Rock Bottom. That and another attempt at the same move are both countered and the F5 gives Lesnar the title.

Rating: B-. The match was just ok until the very hot finish, but the last two minutes or so made up for a lot of the earlier problems. This was a great example of how to make a guy like Lesnar look like a monster. Rock left to film The Rundown immediately after this so Lesnar was the only one left standing. Great way to put Brock over here and a pretty solid match overall.

Lesnar celebrates to end the show.

Overall Rating: A+. As I said this is considered one of the best shows of all time and it's easy to see why. The main event was the start of a new era in the company, there's a masterpiece of a match, the upper half of the card is stacked and the worst match is passable. I can't put it as high as Wrestlemania X7 on the all time scale but the fact that it's even in the conversations speaks volumes. This is absolutely worth seeing though and HHH vs. Shawn is must see.

Ratings Comparison

Kurt Angle vs. Rey Mysterio

Original: A+

Redo: A-

Chris Jericho vs. Ric Flair

Original: B

Redo: C

Eddie Guerrero vs. Edge

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Un-Americans vs. Booker T/Goldust

Original: C-

Redo: D+

Rob Van Dam vs. Chris Benoit

Original: B

Redo: B

Undertaker vs. Test

Original: D

Redo: D

Shawn Michaels vs. HHH

Original: A+

Redo: A+

The Rock vs. Brock Lesnar

Original: C+

Redo: B-

Overall Rating

Original: A+

Redo: A+

Still a masterpiece.

Here's the original review if you're interested:

<http://kbwrestlingreviews.com/2011/08/05/history-of-summerslam-count-up-summerslam-2002-best-summerslam-ever/>

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